

From: Berndt, Cindy
Sent: May 16, 2008 08:23
To: Wagner, Aaron
Subject: FW: Hazardous Pollutants Emissions Permit for Dominion Power's Virginia City coal-fired plant

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-----Original Message-----

From: William Maxwell [mailto:wfm@uvawise.edu]
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2008 4:00 PM
To: vchec
Cc: wfm@virginia.edu
Subject: Re: Hazardous Pollutants Emissions Permit for Dominion Power's Virginia City coal-fired plant

TO: Virginia Air Quality Control Board

The Virginia Air Quality Control Board deserves the thanks of a grateful Commonwealth for its decision to exercise its constitutional authority to determine if Dominion Power should be given a permit to emit hazardous substances into the air at its proposed coal-fired energy center at Virginia City in Wise County. At this point we can still say "Yes Virginia, there is still a Commonwealth," since one of those fine old political concepts basic to the idea of commonwealth - boards of citizen-commissioners set aside to look after concerns of general welfare, health, and safety - is doing its duty, even though local and state representatives are everywhere more eager to serve wealth and power. We can hope this decision by the Air Quality Control Board does not turn out to be the 'swan song' of a venerable institution, but if so, better for it to go into oblivion singing at least. I urge the Air Pollution Control Board to rise to its constitutional responsibility to the Commonwealth and deny Dominion Power's permit at this time, due to the level of the hazardous materials - mercury and others - it petitions to emit into the air and environment.

Consider the following:

Dominion Power has lavished money and all its lobbying and PR skills, especially in prevaricating full-page newspaper ads, and done so continuously. The ads promise to meet or surpass all federal standards for public health, and can actually make the region cleaner. What federal standards are there, and which are being enforced to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act? Dominion is asking for a larger mercury emission standard at the Virginia City plant than at a plant it previously built, and on a scale relative to the mercury content in the different fuels it might use at the plant.

Who could be against 'clean coal,' coal - fired energy plants that did not degrade the air we breathe and the water we drink, or destroy the the land and the mountaintops to get to the cheapest coal by strip-mining? Dominion's proposed plant at Virginia City is not a 'clean coal'

plant. There will be more rational regulations in the near future to provide a cleaner environment and combat global warming if reasonable regulation can prevail over greed. New energy plants will have to hew to stricter and costlier standards. Dominion expects to be entrenched by then, happily increasing their revenues, their rates, and their profits to investors by polluting more freely.

In other states - Kansas, Florida, Illinois and more - communities have rejected air-polluting coal-fired energy plants. In Southwest Virginia, job-hungry and revenue-hungry county governments, commercial interests, industrial development authorities, and an already thriving coal industry have uncritically embraced Dominion Power's coal-fired plant for the jobs it offers. It is embarrassing that public discussion has elicited no evidence of members of local elected representative body ever raising concerns about air or water or environmental quality in discussions with spokesmen for Dominion Power.

The Southwest Virginia Graduate Medical Consortium (located at UVA's College at Wise) reported in a statistical study that Wise County's Poverty rate in 2000 was 108% higher than Virginia's average, and that per capita income was 59% of the state average. The study further reported that death rates per 100,000 was in Wise County higher than the state average (1998 - 2002) for chronic lower respiratory disease by 41%, pneumonia and influenza by 75%, chronic liver disease by 57%, cancer by 21%, Alzheimer's by 50% and heart disease by 27%. Asthma is particularly widespread in the area.

To add this new coal-fired plant to the AEP plant at nearby Carbo would significantly increase air and environmental degradation from mercury, SO₂, CO₂, and NO_x emissions.

Disregard for the quality of the environment of Southwest Virginia, of the health of its people, and of the mountainous landscape prey to cheap methods of coal extraction by strip-mining, can, if unchecked or unregulated, turn the far southwestern part of Virginia into something quite like Aldous Huxley's prediction of the 'reservation' in BRAVE NEW WORLD. That place was a polluted, scarred, backward area, and fenced, its people primitive, uneducated, and existing only to serve the needs or diversions of the advanced urban areas. Perhaps our fate will not be that bad. We can probably compete on the level of other developing areas of the world, if necessary.

The Air Pollution Control Board should do its constitutional duty as a board of commissioners of Commonwealth government - deny the permit requested by Dominion Power to protect Virginia citizens and the environment from hazardous emissions, until such time as that corporation can truthfully approximate reasonable standards for 'clean coal.'

(signed)
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